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WO 02/06289 A1

(54) Title: PROCESS FOR THE PREPARATION OF HIGHLY PURE CRYSTALLINE (R,S) - CEFUROXIME AXETIL

(57) Abstract: A process for the preparation of highly pure crystalline form of cefuroxime-1-acetoxyethyl ester (cefuroxime axetil) from cefuroxime by reacting an amine salt of cefuroxime with an esterifying reagent.

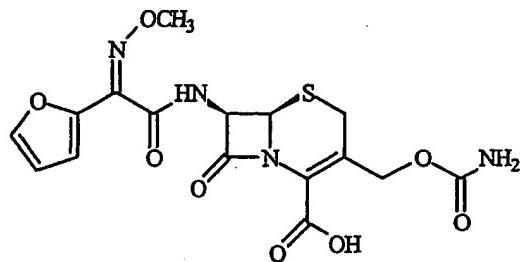
**PROCESS FOR THE PREPARATION OF  
HIGHLY PURE CRYSTALLINE (R,S) - CEFUROXIME AXETIL**

**FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

The present invention relates to a process for the preparation of highly  
 5 pure crystalline form of cefuroxime-1-acetoxyethyl ester (cefuroxime axetil)  
 from cefuroxime in a single step.

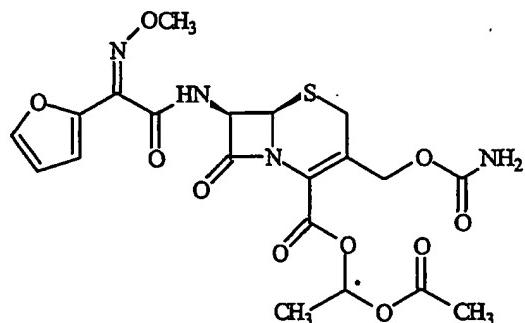
**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

Cefuroxime is chemically (6R, 7R)-3-carbamoyloxymethyl-7-[*(Z*)-2-(fur-  
 2-yl)-2-methoxy-iminoacetamido] ceph-3-em-4-carboxylic acid and has the  
 10 structural Formula II:



**FORMULA II**

15 Cefuroxime axetil having the structural Formula I:



**FORMULA I**

is the 1-acetoxyethyl ester of cefuroxime, a cephalosporin antibiotic with a broad spectrum of activity against gram-positive and gram negative micro-organisms. This compound as well as many other esters of cefuroxime, are disclosed and claimed in U.S. Patent No. 4,267,320. According to this patent,  
5 the presence of an appropriate esterifying group, such as the 1-acetoxyethyl group of cefuroxime axetil, enhances absorption of cefuroxime from the gastrointestinal tract, whereupon the esterifying group is hydrolyzed by enzymes present in the human body. Because of the presence of an asymmetric carbon atom at the 1-position of the 1-acetoxyethyl group, cefuroxime axetil can be produced as R and S diastereoisomers or as a racemic  
10 mixture of the R and S diastereoisomers. U.S. Patent No. 4,267,320 discloses conventional methods for preparing a mixture of the R and S isomers in the crystalline form, as well as for separating the individual R and S diastereoisomers.

15       The difference in the activity of different polymorphic forms of a given drug has drawn the attention of many workers in recent years to undertake the study on polymorphism. Cefuroxime axetil is the classical example of amorphous form exhibiting higher bioavailability than the crystalline form.

U.S. Patent No. 4,562,181 and the related U.S. Patents No. 4,820,833;  
20 4,994,567 and 5,013,833, disclose that cefuroxime axetil in amorphous form, essentially free from crystalline material and having a purity of at least 95% aside from residual solvents, has a higher bioavailability than the crystalline form while also having adequate chemical stability. These patents disclose that highly pure cefuroxime axetil can be recovered in substantially

amorphous form from a solution containing cefuroxime axetil by spray drying, roller drying, or solvent precipitation. In each case, crystalline cefuroxime axetil is dissolved in an organic solvent and the cefuroxime axetil is recovered from the solution in a highly pure, substantially amorphous form.

5        Another U.S. Patent No. 5,063,224 discloses that crystalline R-cefuroxime axetil which is substantially free of S-isomer is readily absorbed from the stomach and gastrointestinal tract of animals and is therefore ideally suited to oral therapy of bacterial infections. According to this patent, such selective administration of R-cefuroxime axetil results in surprisingly greater bioavailability of cefuroxime, and thus dramatically reduces the amount of unabsorbable cefuroxime remaining in the gut lumen, thereby diminishing adverse side effects attributable to cefuroxime.

10      British Patent Specification No. 2,145,409 discloses a process for obtaining pure crystalline cefuroxime axetil and is said to be an improvement over British Patent Specification No. 1,571,683. Sodium cefuroxime is used as the starting material in the disclosed specification, which in turn, is prepared from either 3-hydroxy cefuroxime or cefuroxime. Said process involves an additional step of preparing sodium cefuroxime, and therefore is not economical from commercial point of view.

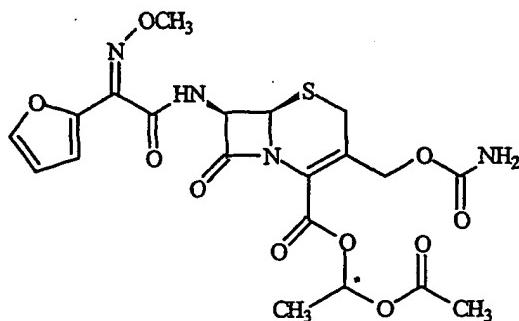
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#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is the object of the present invention to provide an efficient process for the preparation of highly pure crystalline form of cefuroxime axetil. Such a product would not only be useful in being a highly pure form of the active

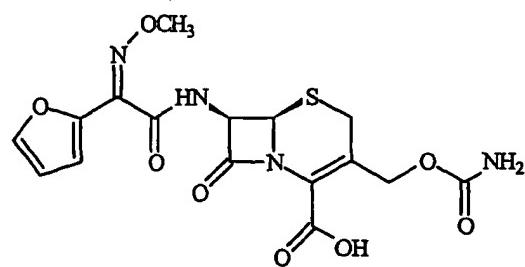
compound but would also be highly useful as a starting material for the preparation of a highly pure, substantially amorphous form of cefuroxime axetil, which has high bioavailability upon oral administration. The present process uses conditions which are convenient to perform on a commercial scale, operationally safe and provides the product in pure form.

Accordingly, the present invention provides a process for the preparation of highly pure crystalline form of cefuroxime axetil of structural Formula I:



### FORMULA I

from cefuroxime of structural Formula II:



### FORMULA II

in a single step which comprises preparing an amine salt of cefuroxime followed by its reaction in situ with an esterifying reagent.

Amine salt is prepared by reacting cefuroxime with a suitable amine in the presence of an inert organic solvent, at a temperature from about -15 to about 25°C, the preferred range being -10 to 10°C and the most preferred range being -10 to 5°C. Cefuroxime axetil is obtained from the amine salt after an esterification reaction and a suitable aqueous work-up. After work-up cefuroxime axetil is thus produced in a single step starting from cefuroxime.

The term "suitable amine" includes primary, secondary, tertiary and cyclic amines. Suitable amine for the preparation of amine salt is selected from ethylamine, diethylamine, diisopropylamine, dibutylamine, di-sec-butyl-amine, triethylamine, dicyclohexylamine, or didecylamine. Most preferably, dicyclohexylamine is used.

Organic solvent is selected from inert solvents such as N, N-dimethylacetamide, N, N-dimethylformamide, N-methylpyrrolidone, acetonitrile, or mixtures thereof. Most preferably, N, N-dimethylacetamide is used.

A preferred reagent for the esterification reaction is (R,S) 1-acetoxyethyl bromide and is prepared by the methods known in the literature.

The esterification reaction is generally carried out in the presence of another base. The base required in the esterification step is selected from carbonate or bicarbonate salts of sodium, potassium, calcium or magnesium. Most preferably, potassium carbonate is used.

Suitable aqueous work-up involves the adjustment of pH with mineral acids and extractions with organic solvents. Acids may include hydrochloric

acid, sulfuric acid, and phosphoric acid. Hydrochloric acid being the preferred acid. Any organic solvent may be used for extraction and such solvents are known to a person of ordinary skill in the art and include: water-immiscible and partially miscible solvents, such as chloroform, dichloromethane, 1,2-dichloroethane, hexanes, cyclohexane, toluene, methyl acetate, ethyl acetate and the like.

The product may be obtained by reducing the volume of organic solvent containing cefuroxime axetil by evaporation, adding a miscible polar solvent and precipitating the desired product by addition of an anti-solvent or by adding a polar solvent to the solvent system containing cefuroxime axetil and precipitating by addition of anti-solvent. The addition of polar solvent greatly reduces the presence of impurities, specifically  $\Delta^2$  isomer of cefuroxime axetil in the final product. Polar solvent may be selected from a group consisting of a lower alkanol, denatured spirit, isopropanol, and the like, ketones such as acetone, or esters such as methyl acetate or ethyl acetate and mixtures thereof. Precipitation may be effected by the addition of appropriate quantities of anti-solvent for the cefuroxime axetil. Suitable anti-solvents include water, alkanes, mixtures of alkanes, such as hexane, cyclohexane or cyclopentane, ethers such as isopropyl ether, or aromatic hydrocarbons, such as benzene or toluene. The polar solvent and an anti-solvent should be at least partially miscible and preferably completely miscible.

Methods known in the art may be used with the process of this invention to enhance any aspect of this process. For example, the solution

may be seeded with the crystals of cefuroxime axetil prior to the initiation of product crystallization or the slurry may be cooled prior to filtration. The product obtained may further be purified by recrystallization from solvent(s) using similar conditions for precipitation as those described above which give  
5 cefuroxime axetil. This includes dissolving cefuroxime axetil in a solvent and precipitating it with an anti-solvent.

The cefuroxime axetil produced by the process of this invention has an R to S isomer mole ratio of approximately 1:1 and is generally not less than 96% m/m pure, aside from residual solvents and related impurities.

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#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Other features of the invention will become apparent in the course of the following description of exemplary embodiment, which is given for illustration of the invention, and are not intended to be limiting thereof.

#### **EXAMPLE 1**

15

Dicyclohexylamine (17.2 g) in N, N-dimethylacetamide (50 ml) was added to a solution of cefuroxime acid (42.4 g) in N, N-dimethylacetamide (300 ml) at about -10°C. (R,S)-1-Acetoxyethylbromide (33.4 g) in N, N-dimethylacetamide (50 ml) was added to the above solution and the reaction mixture was stirred for 45 minutes at about -3 to 0°C. Potassium carbonate (1.1 g) was added to the reaction mixture and it was further stirred at that temperature for about 4 hours. The reaction mixture was worked up by pouring into it ethyl acetate (1.0 lt), water (1.2 lt) and dilute hydrochloric acid (3.5% w/w, 200 ml). The organic layer was separated and the aqueous layer

was again extracted with ethyl acetate. The combined organic extracts were washed with water, dilute sodium bicarbonate solution (1%), sodium chloride solution and evaporated in vacuo to give a residue. Methanol was added to the residue and the crude product was precipitated by adding water.

5       The resulting precipitate was filtered off and recrystallized from the mixture of ethylacetate, methanol and hexane. The precipitated product was filtered, washed and dried to give pure crystalline cefuroxime axetil (42.5 g).

Assay (by HPLC on anhydrous basis) - 98.2% w/w; Diastereoisomer ratio - 0.53; Total related substances - 0.48% w/w.

10

## EXAMPLE 2

Dicyclohexylamine (17.2 g) in N, N-dimethylacetamide (50 ml) was added to a solution of cefuroxime acid (42.4 g) in N, N-dimethylacetamide (300 ml) at about -10°C. (R,S)-1-Acetoxyethylbromide (33.4 g) in N, N-dimethylacetamide (50ml) was added to the above solution and the reaction mixture 15 was stirred for 90 minutes at about -3 to 0°C. Potassium carbonate (1.2 g) was added to the reaction mixture and it was further stirred at that temperature for about 4 hours. The reaction mixture was worked up by pouring into it ethyl acetate (1.0 lt), water (1.2 lt) and dilute hydrochloric acid (3.5% w/w, 200 ml). The organic layer was separated and the aqueous layer was again 20 extracted with ethyl acetate. The combined organic extracts were washed with water, dilute sodium bicarbonate solution (1%), sodium chloride solution and evaporated in vacuo to give a residue. Methanol was added to the residue and the product was precipitated by adding cyclohexane. The precipi-

tated product was filtered, washed and dried to give pure crystalline cefuroxime axetil (44.5g).

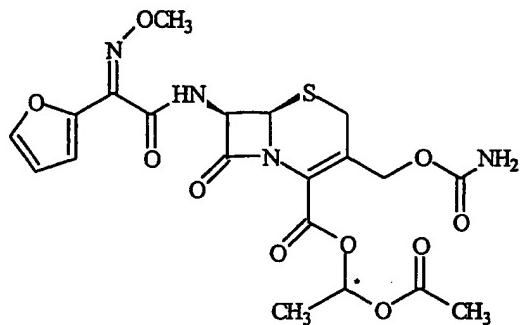
Assay (by HPLC on anhydrous basis) - 99.1% w/w; Diastereoisomer ratio - 0.53; Total related substances - 0.6% w/w.

5 While the present invention has been described in terms of its specific embodiments, certain modifications and equivalents will be apparent to those skilled in the art and are intended to be included within the scope of the present invention.

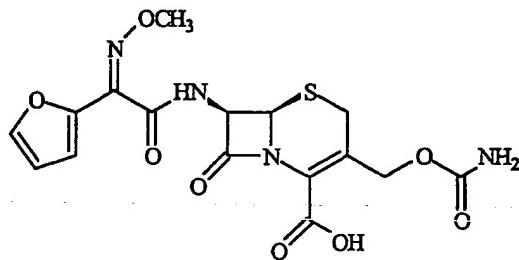
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**WE CLAIM :**

1. A process for the preparation of highly pure crystalline (R,S)-cefuroxime axetil of Formula I:

**FORMULA I**

from cefuroxime of Formula II:

**FORMULA II**

which comprises preparing an amine salt of cefuroxime, followed by its reaction with an esterifying reagent.

2. The process of claim 1, wherein the amine salt is reacted in situ.

23. The process of claim 22 wherein solvent is selected from the group consisting of methanol, ethanol, denatured spirit, isopropanol, acetone, methyl acetate, ethyl acetate, or mixtures thereof.
24. The process of claim 21 wherein polar solvent is added to said solvent system after the amount of solvent has been reduced.
25. The process of claim 24 wherein solvent is reduced by evaporation under vacuum.
26. The process of claim 21 further comprises adding an anti-solvent to effect precipitation.
27. The process of claim 26 wherein an anti-solvent is at least partially miscible.
28. The process of claim 27 wherein an anti-solvent is selected from the group consisting of water, alkanes, mixture of alkanes, ethers or aromatic hydrocarbons.
29. The process of claim 28 wherein solvent is hexane, cyclohexane, cyclopentane, isopropyl ether, benzene or toluene.
30. The process of claim 1 further comprises purifying cefuroxime axetil by recrystallization from solvent(s).

## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Int'l Application No

PCT/IB 01/01259

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER  
 IPC 7 C07D501/34 A61K31/545 A61P31/04

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

## B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 C07D

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, PAJ, WPI Data

## C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 4 267 320 A (GREGSON MICHAEL ET AL) 12 May 1981 (1981-05-12) cited in the application column 1, line 5 - line 6	1-12, 15-30
Y	column 3, line 16 - line 30 example 1 ---- PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 014, no. 310 (C-0736), 4 July 1990 (1990-07-04) & JP 02 104590 A (TOYOHICO KIKUCHI), 17 April 1990 (1990-04-17) abstract ----	1-12, 15-30
		1-12, 15-30

 Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C. Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

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**INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT**

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/IB 01/01259

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